

THE STORY OF
CANADA BLACKIE

BY ANNE P. FIELD

ILLUSTRATED BY
THOMAS MOFFAT OSBORNE





THE STORY
OF
CANADA BLACKIE

BY
ANNE P. L. FIELD

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
THOMAS MOTT OSBORNE
WARDEN OF SING SING PRISON



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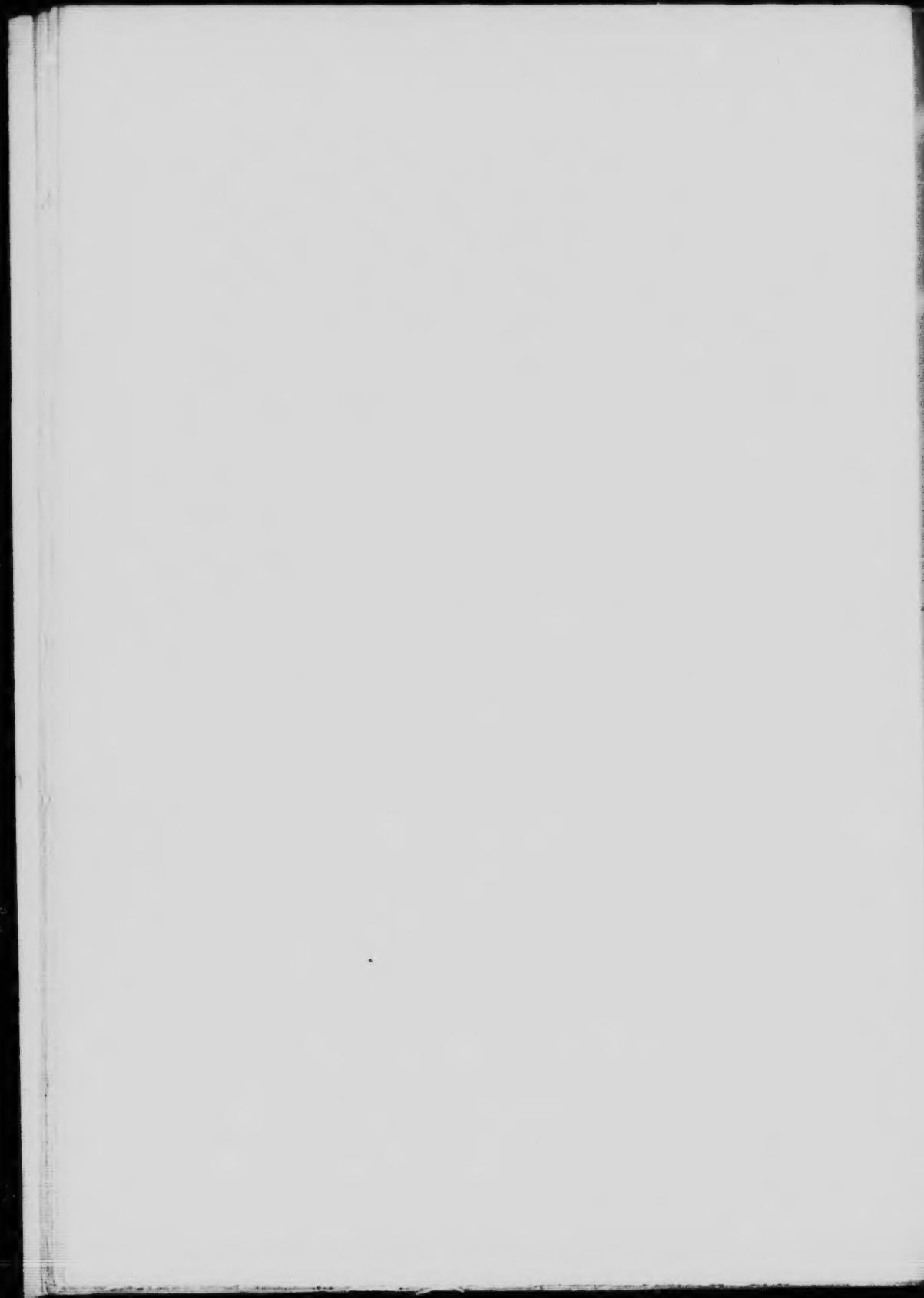
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To
BLACKIE'S PALS
This little book is
gratefully and affectionately
dedicated



INTRODUCTION

Deep down in the heart of every man is an innate love of humanity—a spark of that divine love that redeems the world—the spirit of God.

The old prison system with its repression of all natural instincts—its silence, its espionage, its brutality—tended to crush and deform the character of every man who came under its control—officers and prisoners alike. It is a proof of the divine nature of man that in spite of all the torture that stupidity could inflict, the soul of the prisoner would not be crushed. It

could be driven into revolt, but it could not be killed.

So we find in the prisons a passionate friendship for down-trodden humanity—a loyalty, a splendid spirit of coöperation, a vigorous endurance which, if it could be utilized by society, would tend to uplift the whole community.

Can it be so utilized?

The story of Canada Blackie gives the answer.

In his case a powerful destructive force was turned and made constructive. The man who was regarded as the most dangerous criminal in the State, became, through the same strength that made him dangerous, a loyal and

INTRODUCTION

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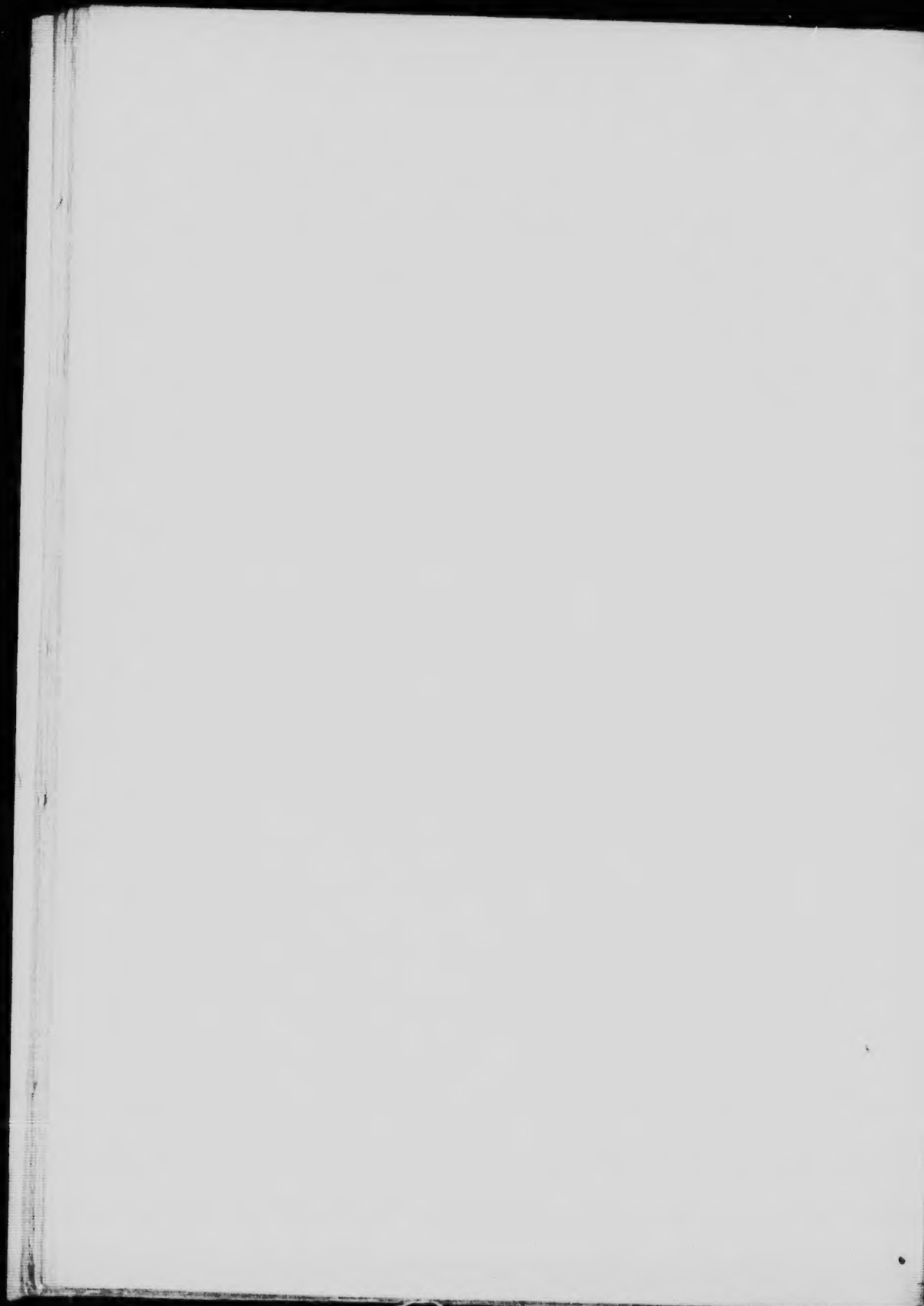
trusted friend of the authorities—helping to build up a new and better prison system by the sympathetic help of the prisoners themselves.

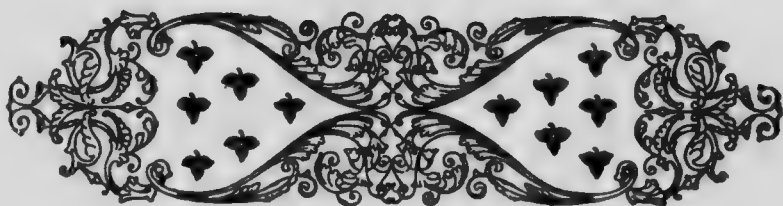
The old prison system had seriously crippled him; but wasted by disease he was yet able to do a man's part in the brief time allotted to him; and by the force of a great example to help make firm the foundations of a new penology.

For many years to come, the name of Canada Blackie will be an inspiration to all who knew him, both within and without the prison.

THOMAS MOTT OSBORNE,
Warden of Sing Sing Prison.

July 7, 1915.





Banked Fires

OF prisoners and prisons I had talked
To eager listeners that afternoon,
And then at twilight through the pines I walked
To a poet's cabin, where a young white moon
Swung in the treetops, and a silver star
Silently pointed to the door ajar.

Solace I needed, for my seething mind
Ached with its effort. Had I caused the blind
To see? Did the deaf ears hear?
Ah, how I longed to make my message clear!

Then the poet came and drew me in
To a great room half-swathed in shadows, where
He bade me rest within a well-worn chair

Before the hearth—which seemed quite cold and
gray

To me—but suddenly I saw my host begin
To stir the ashes in his gentle way,
And soon he found a spark, and then a flame
Leaped upward leading others, till the room
Became a thing of light! The gloom
Had gone and nothing was the same.

Then the poet smiled and glanced at me—
“I seek for hidden sparks, you see,
Within the ashes, for I bank my fire
That it may spring to life at my desire.
But tell me why this radiance on your face?
Do you behold a vision? Has my spark
Kindled a flaming thought?”

Swiftly I turned
To answer. God in His grace
Has spoken in a symbol. From the dark
He has sent light. The message that I burned
To give the world is here revealed.
What you have caused this mass of gray to yield,
We, outside prison walls, must draw from men
Behind the bars. The ashes of a soul

We need but gently stir to find the gleam.
Are not earth's purest treasures kept concealed
In her deep breast? Again and yet again
Our searching is rewarded, till the whole
Reality stands master of the dream.
Today your hearth has yielded me a joy
With heaven's meaning, for each man or boy
Whose cause I strive to plead, whose grief is
mine,

Is a banked fire which holds a spark divine.
For centuries these holy sparks were hurled
Out on neglected ash-heaps of the world,
Until one came who stirred with tender hands
The grayness and the gloom; who pierced the
mass

Of hatred till they said "he understands."
Then prison miracles were brought to pass,
For sparks innumerable he found that filled with
light

And comfort many lives, that made the night—
That long, long night of desolate despair—
Seem but a fearful dream, for hope was there,
And faith in God returned, and self-respect;

Ambition and the will to serve—to be
Good citizens when at last came liberty.

I paused—for it was time for me to go.
The flames had vanished and the fire burned low.

The poet knelt before the embers red—
“You’ve made my hearth a sacred thing,” he
said.

“God grant that I may also find the spark
Divine to glorify the dark.”

And then beneath the stars I took my way
With a new courage for the men in gray.

ANNE P. L. FIELD.

November, 1915.



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The Story of Canada Blackie

CHAPTER I

Introducing Canada Blackie

EARLY in the gray dawn of February 26th, 1915, three men went to the electric chair in Sing Sing Prison while "Canada Blackie," himself near death from tuberculosis, lay on his little white bed on the third floor of the warden's house at Sing Sing and whispered this prayer which the watcher by the bedside will never forget.

"O God, if I could only be taken instead of those three young men in the full vigor of their strength! There is work for them to do on this earth, even behind the bars, while my course is run. The sand in my hour-glass has only a few grains left, and they are rapidly slipping through. But—Thy will be done! and if they are to go and I am to stay, even for a little while, may it be for some great and high purpose. O God, in spite of the past, make the life of each man within the walls count for something! May the passing out of those three brave souls to-day mean also the passing out of that old medieval law of capital punish-

ment. Bless all my dear pals everywhere."

"Canada Blackie," so called because of his Canadian nativity and his thick raven hair, was one of the most dramatic and picturesque figures in modern criminal annals, and for twelve years was considered the most daring and dangerous convict in New York State. A victim of the stupid brutality of the old prison system—his early and tragic death in his forty-second year, the direct result of its maltreatment, he was also the most triumphant example of the reforming power of the new system of common sense as introduced at Auburn

by Mr. Thomas M. Osborne—now warden of Sing Sing—and Warden Rattigan of Auburn, by permission of State Superintendent of Prisons John B. Riley, and now being successfully worked out at Auburn and Sing Sing.

Blackie died a free man. Governor Whitman pardoned him on February 16th, after hearing from Warden Osborne of the man's desperate illness, and the remarkable story of his change of heart and his service to his fellow prisoners.

Blackie's adventurous career began at an early age. His mother, whom he dearly loved, died when he was a mere lad. In later years, in

a letter to a friend, he wrote, "My mother died broken-hearted. Her last thoughts were of me. Her last word my name. When they whispered that I would not be there to kiss her good-by, her heart broke. 'Goldheart' was my pet name for her, and her heart was gold indeed!" In another letter to the same friend he says: "For years I have been so much alone that sometimes I feel like a tired bird at sea. To-night, though, after once more reading your letters, I am again a care-free boy at mother's side. Once again I see the dear old homestead resting peacefully upon the hillside. Once

more I watch the sun sinking behind the mountains, leaving a trail of violet haze that is good to look upon. Over in the meadowland a silvery throated bird is singing its vesper hymn, and from afar I catch a faint bark from dear old Dan as he drives home the cows for milking. The maple-tops sway gracefully in the soft southland breeze, and all is restful and full of peace. Mother is at the organ playing a soft strain that will linger forever with me. Now she allows her gaze to turn from the music and wander over to me, and I notice that refined look of delicacy which is hers by birthright. Sister is there also. What a loving

little angel she was!—always ready to help mother smooth away my little boyhood troubles.”

Rebelling at his father's unreasonableness and lack of understanding, the boy Blackie ran away from home and joined a circus troupe, with which for two years he was an aerial performer of considerable skill. Regarding that experience he said: “I loved the life—it just suited my dare-devil temperament. The danger and excitement of it; the thrill of swinging through the air, in silk tights, before a breathless, fascinated throng, twice a day! But it all ended suddenly one night, and I hated it then as much as I had loved

it! As I was about to swing toward my woman partner, fifty feet away, my eyes were distracted by the sight of a brilliant yellow feather bobbing up and down in the crowd below. I missed my count, and failed to catch her when she let go of her trapeze, and she fell. I can still hear the sickening crunch of her body as it struck the turf—that was before the day of safety nets—that night I ran away again, but the woman is still living maimed for life—by a yellow feather!”

Recently when asked if he could remember any incident in his childhood tending to start him on his life of crime, he replied: “Yes, I

can tell you of one, and when you're speaking on prison reform this story will illustrate how all these questions of education and child-welfare and prison reform are inter-related. When I was seven years old I attended a little country school of about twenty-four pupils. The teacher was just a slip of a girl scarcely out of her teens, and without any interest in her work. She was engaged to be married, and when she wasn't twirling her engagement ring and gazing into space, she was reading 'The Duchess'! I was a quick-witted kid. I never had to study very hard to get my lessons, and I had sized up that teacher. She got

on my nerves. I never could stand stupidity in anything—much less in a woman, so one day when we were all out for recess, I called a bunch of the kids over in a corner of the yard and said: ‘I’ll bet you a round of peppermint sticks that I can give teacher a wrong answer in geography and get away with it.’ They took me up and dared me, and when the class was called, teacher, with that far-away look in her eyes, asked me to bound the State of Maine. I stood up as cool as you please and rattled off in one breath: ‘Maine is bounded on the north by the Pacific Ocean, on the south by the Gulf of Mexico, on the east by New Jersey and on the

west by New York,' and all that teacher did was to yawn and say, 'Next, bound Connecticut!' From that minute I was the real teacher of that school. I had tasted my first sense of power, and I had discovered how half asleep most people are, and how easy it is to fool them! I was the leader of those twenty-four kids from that day—and I got the peppermint sticks, too!"

A few years later Blackie became the leader of a gang of young crooks, most of whom were several years older than he. He was the brains of the band. He would think out a plan for a robbery like a general planning a great battle,

and then direct its carrying out to the smallest detail.

Blackie became a famous cracksman—"the whitest of yeggmen," as his pals called him. He used to laugh and say, "Yes, I always claimed to be a direct descendant of old John Yegg. Who was John Yegg? Why, John was the greatest gypsy bandit that ever roved, and his followers were called 'Yeggmen.' He was a game and fearless old man who stopped at nothing. It seemed grand to me then to be an outlaw. I knew no authority, and took pride in recklessness. The greatest sensation I ever had was standing with a loaded revolver over an engineer's

heart, and ordering him to slow down an express train for *me!* Gee! that was some sensation! Penalty?—no man intent on a job ever thinks of the penalty. Of course, somewhere back in his subconscious mind there's the idea of being caught and penalty, but in the excitement of the moment he forgets it and knows no law."

In April, 1903, Blackie was sentenced to life imprisonment for participating in a raid on a country bank in which the watchman was killed. Two members of his gang went to the electric chair, and a third is still serving a life-sentence. Blackie was sent to Clinton—the prison, as some one has vividly de-

scribed it,—“on the bleak hilltop of Dannemora, up above Plattsburg; the pen for convicts spewed out by the gentler prisons.” During the first seven years he had a perfect record. His behavior was exemplary, but the iron and stone entered his very soul and his nerves were shattered by the thousand and one petty rules and humiliations of the stupid system under which he was compelled to exist. Finally he could *exist* no longer—he must *live*—and he determined to escape. With Blackie determination meant action. By that baffling underground method which has been the bane of all prison officials, he obtained a quantity of dynamite and

buried it in the prison yard, with the intention of blowing up the entire north end of the cell-block. The scheme was disclosed by a stool-pigeon, and Blackie entered solitary confinement. After several months of this living death he made another desperate attempt to escape. By the same underground method he secured a piece of gas-pipe from which he fashioned a crude revolver, which he charged with powder made by grinding up the heads of matches and by scraping the sides of matchboxes. "It was exciting work making that revolver," he told a friend, "and it took months to save enough matches. I set her off by a trigger

attached to a piece of string. Sometimes she refused to work, but it did the business all right the night I needed it. I shot a guard through the shoulder—though I got twelve months in a dark cell for doing it.” He was taken to Plattsburg for trial, and there Judge Riley, now the state superintendent of prisons, gave him an additional sentence of ten years. He was returned to Dannemora and kept in a dark cell for one year more—twenty months in all. There was no window, and an extra heavy wooden door was put over the steel entrance door, so that by no chance could he escape or communicate with others.

Only a man of Blackie's indomitable courage and endurance could have survived this treatment, and he was obliged to invent schemes to retain his reason. When questioned about those terrible months, he said: "No one who has not been through a similar experience can imagine the horror, and to me with my high-strung nature it was hell! I had to work hard to keep my mind. I used to call back every bit of stray verse I had ever learned, and would spend days piecing together some long-forgotten stanza. I remember the great difficulty I had in recalling a line in 'Casabianca.' It was two weeks before I got it, but it finally came.

I got back every line of 'Locksley Hall,' and a good deal of 'Childe Harold,' as well as a lot of hymns that my mother taught me when I was a little boy. I always was an enthusiast over poetry.

"I tore off the buttons from my undershirt and tossed them into the darkness, and then would spend hours groping for them. It took me three days once to find one button, for it had rolled into a crack between the doors, but I got it one morning when they swept out the cell. Getting that button was an achievement. It was like finishing the Pyramids or completing a long and hazardous journey."

CHAPTER II

Blackie at Auburn Prison

THE day came when it was thought advisable to transfer Blackie to Auburn. The keepers at Dannemora knew that the dynamite was still concealed somewhere in the yard, and they were all afraid that in some secret way, known only to the underworld, Blackie would instruct others to use it. He was sent to Auburn, blind in one eye through atrophy of the optic nerve, brought on by the darkness, and already the victim of the

tuberculosis which caused his death. Arriving at Auburn he was at once put again into solitary confinement, in the isolation block of cells with the condemned men. It was a feast of liberty compared with the dark cell at Dannemora, for the isolation cells at Auburn have beds and toilet arrangements, and each cell has a little yard in front—a space twelve feet square, with walls fifteen feet high, and a netting over the top, so that no communication can be thrown to a neighbor, but where a man can exercise, and see “the little tent of blue that prisoners call the sky!”

Here he spent two more years, still untamed and rebellious toward

the prison officials. But his attitude toward the men caged in the isolation block was one of deep interested friendship. Many a man on the eve of his execution was comforted and sustained by Blackie's brave words and cheering voice, and many were the letters written by him to the loved ones of some wretched man facing the chair.

Once a boy of twenty-one came in condemned to die. This boy's mother was very religious and her heart was agonized. Blackie knew the lad and his story and he yearned to comfort the mother, remembering his own mother so vividly. Among the lad's possessions was a

hymn-book that his mother had sent him, so one night Blackie wrote some verses about that little hymn-book, and told the lad to send them to his mother, which he did, and the mother thought her own boy had written them. These are the verses:

MOTHER'S HYMN BOOK

One day as I sat yearning for happy days
of yore,
The captain with a bunch of mail stopped
just outside my door;
He handed me a package tied with a
ribbon frail,
A simple little message, but to me a
golden tale,
For I found inside the wrapper a hymn-
book old and worn,
Which mother used to sing from before
her boy was born,

And sister on the fly leaf wrote lovingly
to say—

“This is the book, dear Jack, from which
our mother used to pray.”

I opened it at random, and there before
my eyes

Was that dear hymn she loved so well,
“His Mansions in the Skies”—

I slowly turned the pages, each verse a
message gold,

And read where Jesus welcomed back
the lost ones to the fold,

And gathered up the sunbeams that help
to brighten life,

For there be no dark valleys; all joy
instead of strife.

So I'll trim the lights along my way, and
keep them burning bright,

And throw a life-line where I can, for
mother says it's right.

And if perchance some weary soul I'll
help along life's way,

Then God has blessed this little book
from which she used to pray.

They were read in the village church on the following Sunday, with the result that steps were immediately taken to secure a commutation of sentence—steps which eventually proved successful.

Blackie had a mother cat and three kittens in his cell at Auburn, and in telling a friend how he acquired the pets, he said: "One night when the guard brought my supper, an old gray cat strayed in. The place was alive with rats, so cats were allowed. I was so excited I couldn't eat, for that old gray tabby was the first warm living thing I had touched for over five years. I talked to her as if she were human. I tried to hypno-

tize her so she would remember me and come back, and she did; she understood and became my friend—she knew my desperate need—animals know such things sometimes better than men. She used to sleep on my pillow and I'd put my face close up to her soft fur and be purred to sleep. I can tell you that no music in all the world was ever so transcending as that cat's purring was to my starved ears. I used to save some of my supper for her every night,—and then one memorable day she presented me with three pretty little kittens, which I helped her bring up and educate.

“Tabby's maternal instincts were

not very deep, I'm afraid, for long before the kittens were old enough to fend for themselves she deserted them. I loved them dearly, and couldn't bear to see them die of starvation, so I used to take a small piece of my slice of bread and chew it until it was soft pulp, then feed it to the kittens. I also shared my cup of water with them, and on that meager fare they grew into sizable cats."

One of the most significant events in Blackie's life in Auburn was his meeting with Donald Lowrie, the man who spent ten years in San Quentin prison and who is the author of that soul-stirring

book, "My Life in Prison"—the book that prompted Mr. Osborne to spend a week as an inmate of Auburn prison. A graphic account of the initial meeting of these two men is to be found in Lowrie's recently published book, "My Life Out of Prison."

Blackie and Lowrie became firm friends and corresponded regularly. Lowrie when a guest of Mr. Osborne's at Auburn, on visiting the prison, received a written order from Warden Rattigan to go wherever he pleased, so he paid a visit to the isolation ward and became particularly impressed with Blackie's personality. Permission has

been given to quote from Blackie's letter which appears in "My Life Out of Prison"

"Dear Donald:

"Yours arrived and received a royal welcome. I sincerely hope this reaches you before you leave St. Louis. I have spent many happy days in that good old town, Don, and hope your visit will be a happy one also.

"Well, this is a beautiful night, a silver night and a fitting sequel to the golden day just passed. The sun has been shining nice and warm all day and just about five o'clock we had a little shower. It lasted just long enough to freshen things

up, and left a clear blue sky behind. Just like troubles, eh? Sorrow may seem dark and drear for a time, but eventually it brings the sunshine out from the clouds, and the sky seems more bright after. Last Friday was the anniversary of my eleventh year in my little niche of shame, and I have seen much and felt more in that time, believe me, Don. But it's all in the bit, and if a fellow's foolish enough to cut to the break in the deck, he has no kick coming if the other fellow holds the best hand, and it's only a fool who will not profit by his mistakes. Now, please do not misconstrue this, old man. I do not wish to convey the idea that I have re-

formed, for I have not reached the 'Turn of the Balance' yet, but if I do, and perhaps I have a little yearning that I may, why I—well, I hope I can be just about as good as I have been bad. I have been thinking a whole lot since you left me that day and I wish I could meet such men as you every day. It helps, Don; a hearty handclasp and a pleasant smile work wonders in the heart of the man who is down.

"They say a man can't come back. That's foolish, Don. A knock down is only a rest which a fellow can have while he is taking the count. He can then come up fresh to renew the fight. Well, I suppose I have tired you with all

this prattle, so I will close by wishing you all the beautiful things this world affords."

In May, 1913, five months before he spent his week in Auburn prison, Mr. Osborne met Blackie. Mr. Rattigan had just been made warden and Mr. Osborne visited the isolation block with him, and they stopped in front of Blackie's cell. There they saw a tall gaunt man, considerably over six feet in height, with the familiar tuberculosis stoop. He had a finely shaped head covered with thick, wavy black hair, streaked with gray, a strong chin and jaw, with a firm well-molded mouth, and a pair of fear-

less hazel eyes, the direct gaze of which seemed to penetrate a man's inmost soul. Extraordinary eyes they were—changing with every mood—the eyes of a master mind, revealing an almost uncanny power as they flashed out from under their heavy black brows. Noticeable also were his hands—with unusually long, flexible fingers and deep palms; inventive, capable, determined hands which he used continually, emphasizing his vivid conversation with a thousand gestures.

In regard to this meeting, Mr. Osborne has written, "I did not know who the prisoner was, and did not associate him with the dangerous man of whom I had heard.

Mr. Rattigan introduced us and then passed on to the next cell, while I stopped to chat. After we had spoken a few words I said to him, 'How long a term have you?' He answered, 'Life, and ten years'—then seeing the corners of my mouth beginning to twitch, he added, 'Does seem a little superfluous, doesn't it?'

"It was the next month, in June I think, that I visited him in his cell and we talked of prison reform."

CHAPTER III

Blackie on Prison Reform

IT was after this second visit that Blackie gave Mr. Osborne the following extraordinary notes of his ideas on the subject of their conversation.

“If I wish to move forward out of shadow into sunshine, out of wrong into right, how must I make the start?

“To answer this question fully would require a large volume, but a brief statement will sometimes suffice. Some one has said, ‘As a man thinketh, so is he.’ Taking

this as a fact, I must therefore make my start from the point of right thought. To do this, though, I require some help, for I find that under existing regulations I cannot bring myself to think as a normal person should. My environment is foreign to my nature. I am compelled to live and work with my fellow man, but outside of what conversation my work requires I am prohibited from talking. This barrier from all social intercourse with my fellow man has a tendency to unfit me for my life to come in the outer world. Expression is life. A beautiful thought unexpressed dies. A painting must have proper expression before it is a recognized

work of art. A man cannot very well demonstrate his good or bad qualities unless given a chance to do so. How can any one tell whether I am fit to take my place in the outer world and live as it was intended I should live, unless I have been given a chance to demonstrate my worth while here?

"Some years ago I lived in a small railroad division town. There was no place of amusement, and the only place the men had to pass their spare time in was in the saloon, until some one fitted up a room in the depot and started a Y. M. C. A. The larger part of the men spent their time in that room after that. Why doesn't some

bright fellow in prison start something like that? In the event of such, the men so inclined could gather to discuss the topics of the day. There could be debates, lectures and ethics, in fact everything which has a tendency to uplift the men, could be worked out in that room. There could also be a quiet room for those who wish to read or write. I know many men who could support their loved ones were they only allowed the privilege to sell their articles to a publisher. There could also be the hall privilege. A man wishing to spend an evening with a friend could, if his conduct merited it, take his chair and sit by his friend's door. All

these privileges would be eagerly looked forward to after the day of silence in the shop. If silence must be maintained in the shop, why not give the men a chance in the evenings to fit themselves for an honest life when they are set free? To do these things would require more night officers of course, but the good derived from them would be well worth the little expense attached.

"In one of the western prisons there is a swimming-pool where the men can bathe. When a man finishes his work he takes his towel, soap, etc., and leaves the shop to take his bath. No officer is required, as the men maintain the discipline and it is well kept, you may

be sure. In Columbus the men are paid for all work turned out after their allotted day's work is finished. The money consists of checks. These the men keep themselves, and can use them to purchase what is allowed. They also have hall privileges. All these things help to uplift. The men work better, behave better, think better thoughts and so are better fitted to take their place in the world once more. A man will show his best side when rewarded. Threaten and bully him and the chances are he will remain in the same old rut. Over in Toronto, Canada, the Central prison works four hundred men on a farm of twelve hundred acres.

These men are well behaved—only four out of a transient population of a thousand tried to escape, and not one-half the number came back to prison that used to under the old inside system. The road building in this State has so far proved a success. Why not extend it? If it gives satisfaction to a few, it will to the many. Coöperation is what is required in all prisons. Give a man a chance to help himself and in return he will help others. The prisons for centuries have been run by repression. What has it accomplished? Society's pocket-book could best answer that question. And that reminds us of the question of self-support. The State for

years has had to support her prisoners. It is nearly time now that some way should be devised whereby the prisoner could become self-supporting, and at the same time be enabled to add to the support of his family. Crime would greatly decrease if such a law could be enacted. To take the bread-winner from his family, and leave them in poverty and want would be the proper thing to do if society were looking to make an industry of crime. Since I came to prison I witnessed a striking illustration of how crime increases. Some moving pictures were being shown where a man was sent to prison—his wife, the only support now of

their child of seven, became sick shortly after the father had left them. The little boy, to procure medicine, etc., for his mother, scaled the wall surrounding a rich man's mansion, and took an armful of flowers from the garden beds. These he sold to passers-by on the street. Several trips the little fellow made before the inevitable came. He was caught, taken before the owner and was about to be handed to a policeman, when the daughter of the house happened into the room. To her the boy told his story. Upon investigation the lad's story proved to be true, and, of course, that brought about a happy ending in that case, but how

is it in most all other cases where there is no lady bountiful to intercede? The boy goes to the reformatory, and under their present systems, reformatories are busy hives of industry, where boys are turned out fit pupils for any life of crime they may choose. This one prison alone proves that. It is safe to say seventy or eighty per cent. of the inmates of this institution are graduates from some reformatory. The percentage runs high in most all prisons, also. The boy who is sent to a reform school simply because he is a truant, is placed with the boy who is there for theft. From him he gets his first lesson—the rest is known by all.

"Some time ago, a career of crime was cut short by the law. The man received his start from an institution where children are sent who have disobeyed in some manner. From there he went to the reformatory, then to prison, and, finally, to his death as decreed by the law.

"Had he been paroled when a youngster, instead of being sent to that institution, where he mingled with young thieves, the State might have been saved that execution. Judge Lindsey, of Denver, is paroling boys from his court every day. He takes the youngster into his private room, talks to him in a fatherly manner, gains his confidence, and a

promise to live better, then sends him out to keep that promise. The boy never sees the inside of the reformatory, and is all the better for not doing so. Some day the boy will be a respected citizen. Had he been sent away when his mind and will were in a wayward condition, his chances of becoming a criminal were large.

“‘Familiarity breeds contempt’ they say. Place a young boy in a reformatory and he soon loses his fear of state prison. This is also true in the case of first offenders who come to the prisons. Had they been paroled before they had a chance to get hardened to the life, there would have been less re-

peaters for the State to contend with.

"With all the prisons in New York State, the officials find it hard to make room for the steady increase of population. The prisons are so congested now that some of the men have to sleep out in the halls. In some cases two men have to exist in one little cell that is not large enough for one. How can the State expect to turn out good men under such trying circumstances? If a man can rise above condition like that, he must be made of excellent stuff and it is very seldom that that kind of man comes to prison.

"If environment makes the man,

and reform is really sought after, then make the environment as it should be. Give the men a chance to prove their worth. Help them to think right and you will find that the majority will respond to right treatment. That a great deal of injustice exists in the world is true, and that many who are strong are taking advantage of multitudes that are weak is also true, but there is a peaceful way to remedy a lot of this if the people can only be brought to look upon things as they should be, and not as they are. There is no remedy in sight so far that the State can adopt that will make the convict self-supporting; but each individual interested in

prison reform can so relate himself to the work in hand, that the financial increase to the State, and the problem of recompense and reward to the convict for his labor will be solved. To do this, no under-value nor over-value should be placed on his work. To-day the market for prison-made articles is limited. Would it not be better for all concerned if the prisoner had access to the general market? This can only be accomplished by giving him a fair wage for his labor, and make him support himself out of that wage. If a man is receiving all that he deserves, he will make himself more deserving, and will, of course, turn out better work than

is at present being manufactured inside prison walls, and the State will receive the general market price for the article. Worth is what the world recognizes, and to make an article worth selling, you will have to pay to have it made. The average person who thinks he is being underpaid will not take the proper interest in his work, nor can he be expected to do so. The man who thinks he is not getting a fair deal will not reveal himself as he really is; his real nature is misdirected in anything he undertakes, and everybody is deceived, for he will continually fight against putting his best efforts into his work. This, of course, keeps up a friction

between him and those whose interests it is to have good work turned out. On the other hand, if he is rewarded for his labor, all these troubles will be cleared away and every one will be benefited. The State can not lose by treating her prisoners fairly, and the prisoner is more contented and will live up to the rules when he knows that by turning out a good day's work he is not only benefiting himself, but is also supporting his wife and little ones who are, when we come to look at it rightly, the real sufferers. No man can do what really is right when he knows his dear ones are in want. And right here I ask you to put yourself in the prisoner's place

and ask yourself what would your thoughts be in that case?

"And now just a word in regard to uplifting the prisoner and giving him a chance to look upon things as he should. Some people claim that environment makes the man. If this is true, then why not make prison environment as it should be and not as it is? There is no more danger in giving a convict an opportunity to get education so that he may be a good citizen, than there is in holding him back and allowing him to degrade himself so that he will remain worthless. This does not apply to school education, solely. A man can be a good scholar and still be a pessimist. What is

needed, but is sadly lacking, is some way by which the prisoner can be taught to look upon his incarceration in an optimistic manner.

“When a man first comes to prison, he is given a rule-book,—after reading it through, he comes to this threat: ‘Any infraction of these rules will be punished accordingly.’ Why not let it read: ‘Prisoners obeying these rules will be *rewarded* accordingly.’ That would make the man look upon that set of rules in a little brighter light, instead of driving the steel home to his heart as they now do to some men right on the start of their sentences.

“Another thing which would be

a large factor in the behavior of the men, would be to grade them according to their merits. Many socially inclined men get into trouble by being compelled to mix with constant grumblers. This latter class should be kept by themselves. If this was done the good men in the shops would very soon get rid of any undesirables, and in a short while the men themselves would see that discipline would be maintained, and that that one thing is the secret of success in prison, providing that the man in charge is a person who has full control of himself; for to control others, we must first learn the lesson of self-control. I have known many offi-

cers who have gained the respect of the men in their charge simply by using good judgment. That kind of man seems to know how to handle men. Some time ago one of our greatest penologists wrote an article on paroling all first offenders at the door of the prison. This man seems to know what he is advocating. Oftentimes you will find unexpected good qualities in men from whom you looked for naught but evil, but these good points he will not show to any but the one he considers the right person, and for all of us there is that 'right person.' "

These notes are very remarkable, especially so, as coming from a man

in solitary confinement—a man who, as he wrote Lowrie, had then not yet reached the “turn of the balance.”

CHAPTER IV

Blackie and Mr. Osborne

BLACKIE and Mr. Osborne became close friends by the time the latter had served his week in Auburn prison. He often visited Blackie, who took a keen interest in his experiment and in the formation of the Mutual Welfare League. On one of Mr. Osborne's visits, Blackie, wretchedly ill and suffering, had been rather reticent and morose. After his friend had gone he realized how coldly he had treated him so he wrote the following letter by way of reparation.

"After you left me yesterday, I felt sad and very much ashamed of myself—ashamed to know that I wounded your feelings. Yes, I did hurt you, Mon Ami, I know it. Being somewhat sensitive myself, I too, felt it, and can therefore fully realize how my reticent manner must have seemed to you. And I hope you will believe me when I say that I am sorry, very, very sorry.

"You have been so good, so kind—Mon Ami—that it hurts me to know that I should be the one to cause you any displeasure. I have no excuse to offer for myself, but I do sincerely hope that you will kindly forgive me. Just aft . you

went away I picked up 'The Virginian' and came to the passage where 'The Virginian,' in speaking to his friend said, 'I ain't religious, I know that, but I ain't unreligious,' and I know that too. There's one kind of religion that I respect when I meet it. It is not praying or preaching that has ever caught me and made me ashamed of myself, but one or two people I have knowed that never said a superior word to me. They thought more of me than I deserved and that made me behave better than I naturally wanted to. And if ever I was to have a son or somebody I set store by, I would wish their lot to be to know one or two good folks

mighty well, men or women. And so it is with me, Mon Ami, I, too, would like to be able to hold the respect of one or two good folks mighty well. Some day, perhaps, we shall get to know one another a little better, then you will understand. In the meantime, please try to think of me as well as you possibly can. In writing this I feel that you will know that my contrition is sincere, for I think you know that I am not a sycophant, also that I am not a dissembler. And I am proud to say that I have never, knowingly, betrayed a confidence.

"The Stork came and left me three little baby kittens, 'Nona' named after 'Anona,' you know,

and 'Mona,' after 'Ramona,' and I suppose I must call the other one 'Tom Brown.' But I hope he never has to put in a night in the cooler! Now do not tell the ladies or they will be down here with a ribbon-shower, sure. Baby blue, is it not? One thing, though, you can do if you will. That is, give my sincere respects to your daughter-in-law, and also to those brave little women who had the courage to go over into the women's prison and do their bit like majors. I have heard what they are doing for the girls over there and they are both little Empresses. Well, you must be tired now, so I will close by wishing you all that is good and beautiful.

Good-night, Mon Ami. God bless you and yours is the sincere prayer of one who would like to be worthy of the friendship of such good people."

On the 2nd of June, 1914, Blackie invited Mr. Osborne to come into his cell, remarking that he "had something for him to give the warden." As Mr. Osborne sat there on the bed chatting, Blackie took down a tin box of talcum-powder, and from it extracted a small object tightly bound in a cotton rag. Unwinding this covering he produced a key which he handed to him with the remark: "That key unlocks my cell door. I made it my-

self, and intended using it to escape." Then he added, with pardonable pride, "I'm the only man in this prison who could have made that!" And he told how, when Lowrie had visited him, the key had been tested and the door was open. He had to hold his foot against the door to keep it shut. Then he stooped, and from another hiding-place, drew out an ugly knife, also of home manufacture, which he presented to Mr. Osborne with the words: "I intended to use that, too—" and then added—"I want you to give those to the warden and tell him that I appreciate so deeply what he and you are trying to do for the men here, that he need have

no further anxiety about me, for I'm going straight."

The Mutual Welfare League for self-government had already been established in Auburn with splendid results. The men had been allowed the freedom of the yard three times, beginning with Decoration Day, when they had athletic sports. On June 3rd, after Mr. Osborne had told Warden Rattigan what Blackie had said and done, permission was given him to take Blackie out in the yard. Blackie was among his fellowmen again for the first time in five years. The best description of that experience is given in the following letter sent to Donald Lowrie.

"June 3rd, 1914.

"Dear Friend Don:

"The above is the date of my new birthday. After five years of a living death in solitary, I have been resurrected again,—making my second time on earth, as it were. So you see I was right when I said, 'A man can come back.' On the evening of the third Mr. Osborne came to my door and as the officer who accompanied him inserted the key to spring my lock, Mr. Osborne said, 'Get your coat and cap, old fellow, I want you to come with me and see something worth while.' Knowing that the men had recently been given the liberty of the yard, I, of course, immediately divined the

kindness about to be bestowed. I at first felt inclined to say that I could not accept the invitation, knowing, though, that it was extended in all kindness. My reason for wanting to refuse was because I felt that I would feel too keenly the embarrassment that comes to one when suddenly placed among his fellowmen after so long an absence. Mr. Osborne would not, however, take no for an answer, and kindly insisted that I should put on my coat, he helping me with it, and chatting pleasantly all the time. This I knew was to put me at ease. That's another of the many fine characteristics this big man possesses, Don,—he makes one feel

at home with him right from the start.

"After traversing the corridor of the isolation building, we came to the double locked doors—two of them—which lead directly into the main prison yard. As we stepped into the pure air I felt as though I wanted to bite chunks out of it, but the first deep inhale made me so dizzy that I actually believe I would have staggered had I not taken myself into firm control. On rounding the end of the cloth-shop, we came into full view of the most wonderful, as well as beautiful, sight I have ever seen in prison,—or outside either, for that matter. I hardly know how

to describe this sight; but picture to yourself, if you possibly can, fourteen hundred men turned loose in a beautiful park. For years previous to this good work now being promoted by Mr. Osborne and the prison officials, these same men whom I now see running in and out among beautiful flower-beds and playing like a troop of innocent boys just out of school, had been harnessed, as it were, to the machines in their respective shops, without even the privilege of saying good-night or good-morning to their nearest neighbor. But what a wonderful change has come to pass! Instead of the prison pallor and haunted look which once pre-

dominated, I now notice smiling eyes, and that clean look which exhilarating exercise in the pure air always brings to the face.

"When Mr. Osborne and I reached the lower end of the park, he invited me to stand where we could get a full view of everything. Among the first things I noticed was a ring of the boys formed around something, I could not see what. Mr. Osborne, in answer to my question, said it was a party of Italian lads, waltzing. Just then some one stepped out of the ring, leaving a space through which I could see the boys dancing to their hearts' content. And now my attention was drawn toward a young

fellow who was stepping up briskly to shake hands and congratulate me on my low lease of life.

"Just a word about Billy—Billy Duffy being his name. He is an exceptionally bright young fellow, as his rank of sergeant-at-arms of the Mutual Welfare League denotes. Billy is very fond of athletic sports, and is no novice in the manly art. He is also, I'm told, a warm friend of Tom S——. I congratulate S——.

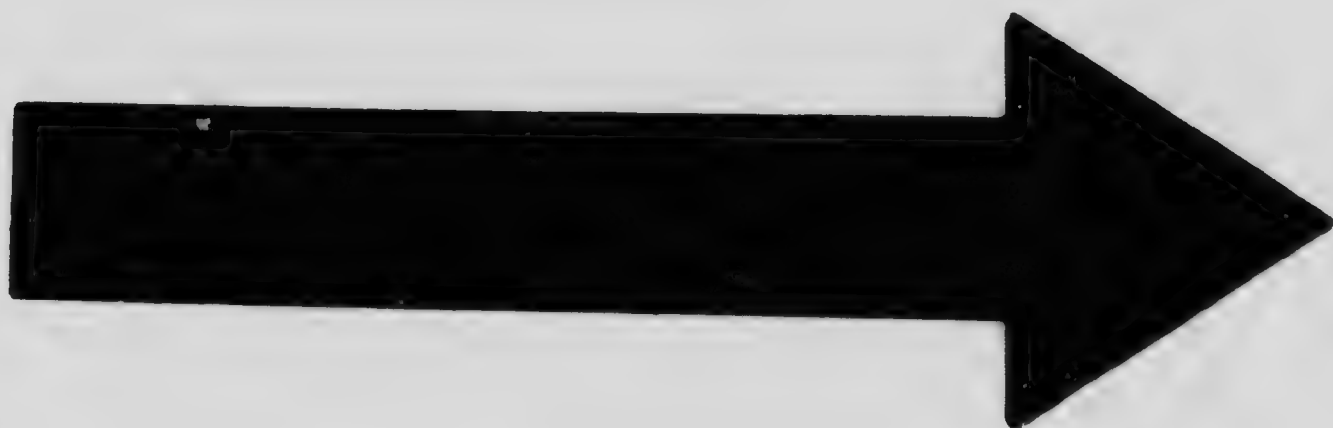
"Several of the boys are now waiting to greet me. Billy, noticing this, turns to chat with Mr. Osborne so as to give them their turn. We are quite a crowd by this time, every one laughing and joking.

Some one suggests that we walk up to the other end of the park. Billy, hearing this, says, 'Yes, come on, old man, it will do you good.' I glance over to Mr. Osborne. He smilingly nods consent. So away we go, he joining the party, also. On the way up the walk, I shake hands with many of the boys, who come running up to extend a kind greeting. Some birthday, eh, Don? All along the line we pass bunches of the fellows, some dancing, others playing stringed instruments, and out on the lawn are hundreds throwing hand ball. Arriving at the upper end of the park, we all go over to lounge on the lawn. I wish I could convey to you

the feeling that came to me as I felt the green yielding grass under my feet. I felt as though I wanted to roll right over; and when you stop to consider that I have not had any grass to stretch out on for over twelve years, you can readily understand my feelings. After spending a very happy evening, the bugle sounded assembly. Mr. Osborne, who had left us some time before to chat here and there with others, now hunted me up and said, 'Come along, old chap, I want you to see how nice the boys march in.' By the time we reached the steps of one of the buildings from which we had an excellent view of everything, the men were in their re-

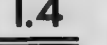
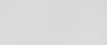
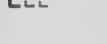
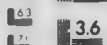
spective places. On both sides of the park the men had formed in double columns on the smooth concrete walks. This gives each man a full view of the beautiful flowerbeds and Old Glory floating in her place at the top of the pole. When the men are all in place, there comes a sudden hush, and then from away up on the extreme right-hand corner from where we stand comes the sweet strain of 'The Star Spangled Banner,' and as the flag dips her—'Good Night, Boys'—and is slowly lowered, each inmate and officer bares his head in all honor to her colors. The music ceases, and I hear in a soft voice, 'All right, Joe,' and Joe, an inmate and dele-

gate of the League, just as softly gives his command, ' 'Bout face.' His company turns as one man; and then another soft, 'Forward, march,' and away they swing into their cell halls in true military style. After watching several companies run in, Mr. Osborne and I started back to where I belong. In doing this we have to pass between two lines of hundreds of men. As we reach about midway, the boys start a hand clapping. They all recognize the kindness Mr. Osborne has bestowed upon me, and show him their appreciation in this manner; and to me their hearty, 'good night, Jack, cheer up, old man,' coming from all down the line, was good to



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hear. Arriving at my quarters, Mr. Osborne extends his hand and bids me a pleasant 'good night' and thus ends my birthday into a new and I hope a better life. Big man? You bet, Don. Tell it to all the good folks out there, won't you?

"Oh, yes! I nearly forgot a very important event. As Mr. Osborne and I were talking, a young fellow came running up and said, 'Mr. Osborne, I wish you would try to understand about that coat. Truly I meant no harm.' Mr. Osborne turned a smiling face to the lad and said, 'It's all right, my boy, I know.' The young fellow thanked him, then scampered back to his play. Truly this man holds us all in the

palm of his hand. The incident of the coat must have been trivial—left it where it should not be, or something like that—but that young fellow's sense of honor compelled him to make an apology; and I thought, if they think the little things important enough to ask forgiveness for, it's a certainty that they will be very careful and hesitate before committing anything serious. And that young fellow's attitude expresses, *I feel sure*, the sentiment of all now domiciled in this old battered ship of state, which is at last being steered into calm waters by the most efficient of pilots. With you on the Pacific Coast and our big men on the At-

lantic, this good work is going to spread like a prairie on fire. We in Auburn are being very closely watched now, and speculation is rife as to the outcome of this endeavor. But I am positive it will be a success, as the men realize that if it is, it will not be long before every prison in the country will take it up.

"Sometime I will tell you how Mr. Osborne has left his beautiful home, loved ones, etc., and voluntarily allowed himself to be quarantined in here for perhaps weeks. We are having a few cases of scarlet fever, but the doctors have it well under check. Still, no one can come or go. He knew this was

about to happen, but left everything beautiful behind so as to be right here in touch with his good work.

“Well, I am tired, so will close and turn in. I hope I have not tired you also, Don, with all this; but it’s my birthday, old fellow, and I wanted to share it with you.”

CHAPTER V

Blackie and the League

THREE weeks later, about the last of June, Blackie was released from solitary confinement and placed among the regular prisoners. He was almost immediately made an assistant sergeant-at-arms of the League, by Pilly Duffy, and in July he was elected a delegate and placed on the executive committee. He became a great power for good in Auburn prison. He had admirable ideas

on the subject of prison reform, and his brilliant qualities of mind, coupled with his genius for leadership, soon made him a prominent figure. By September he was one of the most trusted men, both by officials and inmates, in the prison. He was thinking and planning night and day how best he could further the interests of the League. Blackie had come to have a great loyal love for "Tom Brown" as Mr. Osborne was affectionately called by all the inmates, and wrote him long, friendly letters, from which the following selections are taken. The "Billy" referred to is Billy Duffy, already mentioned as sergeant-at-arms.

"August 25th, 1914.

"Dearest Friend:

"Billy was kind enough to allow me to read your beautiful letter. It, of course, is needless for me to say that I appreciate your loving words as well as he—and the others. Mr. Osborne, you haven't made any mistake in Billy. Could you have only been here that afternoon when he was trying to answer yours, you would have had a look into that big fellow's *big heart*. He wrote page after page only to tear them up and start over again. He wanted to express his very soul I believe, but could not do so on paper. After repeated efforts he turned to me and said, with mois-

ture in his eyes, 'Blackie, I just can't write to Tom. I don't know what I'm turning into. I think I'm getting chicken-hearted, and instead of being a human being I'm beginning to think I should be given a harp and take my place among the angels.' This was not said in an irreverent manner, believe me. You know he can be serious at times—and that was one of the times. He came and pulled me out of my little niche in the wall to show me your letter and I confess that both of us fell down while trying to answer it. I'm alone now. He went over to the southern catacombs, and I suppose repeated his afternoon performance trying to

write you what he considered good enough to interest you. It's too bad you did not meet him earlier in his life. You could have molded him into a president—or better—for he has the stuff in him that men are made of. Your executive abilities coupled with your strength and personality, plus Billy's staying qualities, would be the stepping-stones to any height. Everything is lovely here, and we are all going to be good until you come back home to us once more. Of course, we miss you very much, but are glad you are enjoying a much needed rest with your friends. I had a beautiful letter from your sister. Also one from Donald Lowrie, but

you shall read them all if you wish. Nice article in 'The Outlook.' Well, I've tired you, I suppose, so will say good-night. Don't fall off any mountains! Regards from all the boys.

"P. S. Billy says 'Sure the north wing can have the cup—if *they win it.*' "

"September 5th, 1914.

"Just read your note to Billy. He has sent a telegram which you must have e'er this. He ran away from us to write it, for we all wanted to say something. Had he allowed us to send all the messages we wished the telegram would have been a book. Now get well, mon ami. Gee! we can't stand for all

our friends to be laid up. First it was the warden, then Donald and now yourself. We all want you to have a good rest, of course, but sick! No! no! never! Be cheerful, dear friend. You know my old motto—'Nil desperandum' never despair—it's a big help for sick folks—and others. Billy says, 'If Tom comes back he can have the cup and banner, Oh, the whole damn South Hall if he will only show up hale and hearty.' Best wishes and sincere hopes for a speedy recovery from all."

"November 8th, 1914.

"Dearest of Friends:

"I'm so glad you are up and about

once again. I've been very lonesome, mon ami, and being somewhat sympathetic—by nature perhaps—or shall I say to be *mutual*?—well, anyway, I have been so, also, ever since I last saw you. But so soon as I find you up and around I, too, immediately get better. Now what is it—mutuality? or—well, I think I know what it is, but I also think I'd better wait for some time yet before I express even to myself what I feel it is. Don't you think so, too? But never mind, mon ami, the purest gems are not always found on the surface. A little patient work for awhile yet and you may perhaps find many that will shine with brilliancy. God never

allowed a man to work as hard as you have, and are still doing, without giving him a fitting reward, both here and elsewhere. Just think of how your dearest mother feels when she looks down through the windows of Heaven and sees all the good her boy is doing for other mothers' sons. And what happy times those mothers must spend together with her in the center of the circle as they chat together and go over all the good you are doing. Now I shall not tire you any more, cher ami. Just a word more. Keep cheerful, and get well and strong as soon as you can. Now good-night, dearest of friends. God bless and keep you is the prayer

of one who shall be most sincerely yours as long as you wish it so. Love from Billy, George and everybody."

Once when Mr. Osborne was ill, Blackie sent him a charming little photograph of clouds and sea, with the following message written on the back:

"Dearest Friend:

"This cloud effect is so beautiful I thought perhaps you would enjoy it. God set this scene away out in the Southland, then told the photographer to make a picture from it, then he asked a dear friend to purchase it and forward it to me. It

has made me happy—in turn I pass it on to you, hoping you will also be pleased.”

At times Blackie was very much depressed. The disease was making rapid progress and his strength was failing. He realized this and would speak sadly of his approaching end for he wanted to live keenly. He wanted the chance to make good, to help the cause for which his beloved friend was laboring so indefatigably. He sent the following original verse to Mr. Osborne after one of these periods of melancholy.

“God of love, most peerless Lord of all
Be loving, kind, forgive us when we fall;

With tender patience guide our wander-
ing feet,
You are our hope, our rest, our solace
sweet.
Till all this strife below is o'er and
passed,
We ask your loving aid in first and last,
Meet us at Heaven's gate when this life's
work is done,
Again we ask in Mary's name and that
of Thy dear Son!"

In the summer of 1914 Mr. Os-
borne invited the Hon. E. Kent
Hubbard, of Middletown, Conn.,
director of the Connecticut Re-
formatory at Cheshire, to visit
Auburn prison. Mr. Hubbard be-
came a warm friend to many of the
prisoners—especially to Blackie, in
whom he was immediately inter-
ested. That visit was the initial

cause of a branch of the Mutual Welfare League being established at Cheshire. The following extracts are taken from some of Blackie's letters to Mr. Hubbard.

"September 12th, 1914.

"Dear Friend:

"Have you thought e'er this that I have forgotten you? No, no, Mr. Hubbard, not so. To be frank, I have been writing all my spare letters to Donald Lowrie. He has been sick and I felt that he would be pleased to hear from me. You know Donald and I are fast friends and having lived so long in California myself, why—well, I guess I can cover it all by saying that my

heart often rambles back there. Don will be here next November. He and Mr. Osborne are good friends and work together in this humane uplift work. I wish you could meet him when he comes East but perhaps you may. I think I remember your saying you were going to get his book—'My Life in Prison.' He is a grand fellow and when I say that it is a tie between him and Mr. Osborne—the love I have for both, I mean—why then you will have some conception as to how much I think of him—for you already know how Mr. Osborne has walked right into my heart—all of our hearts here, I may add. Well, we are doing fine here. Eve

thing is running in apple-pie order—New England apple pie—you know the kind I mean, the large-hearted, thick slices, eh? The good old motherly kind. Well, that's the way things are turning out here. We have now a branch of the M. W. L. out in town. One of our boys went home and Mr. Osborne suggested we start this branch and have a man out there as secretary. The executive committee can now recommend outgoing parole men to him. He finds employment and extends a helping hand to all we deem worthy. How long do you suppose it will be before we have a branch of this kind in every city in the State? Not so very, eh? when the people

begin to see that we are determined to 'Do Good and Make Good.' Our motto as you already know. And for good measure I shall add what you said at our meeting in the warden's office—'*Stay good.*' We will, Mr. Hubbard, and we all sincerely hope that you will have the same success with your boys there, as Mr. Osborne has had with us here. Go right to it, dear friend. *You can* win the confidence of the fellows. I *know* it. You won every one here. Every man you met here has talked—and is still talking—of you. I do not wish to flatter you, Mr. Hubbard, but I am going to be frank. You have made a lasting impression with the boys

here. Every time your name is mentioned some one will say, 'That's a square guy.' Another will say 'He sure is; he's an ace.' And I have often heard them say, 'He's right, all the way.' I tell you these remarks prove that you *can* win out there just as you have here. It's not flattery as I said but honest stuff. I shall have to close now, but will write again, if you wish. Best regards and most sincere wishes from all.

"P. S. Billy Duffy says, 'Tell him to hurry up and come to see us.' I join him in sending regards to your boys. The cigars were splendid. Thanks, ever so much."

"November 8th, 1914.

"Have you thought I am going to forget you? No, no, mon ami. It is not that, but you see I have had so many letters to answer and my writing privilege has been limited to one letter each week. Now, however, we can write as often as we have the necessary funds to pay postage. So to-night I am making up for lost time. Could you only get a peep into my niche in the wall, you would think I was correspondence clerk for some large manufacturing firm. I'm head over heels in letters. Well, it seems good to be able to write to those whom I consider my friends, and you I think of always as one of my warmest.

Mr. Osborne dropped in this P. M. to shake hands and let us know he is up and about once more. He has been sick for a few days. Won't you drop him a line of cheer? Do, please. Billy Duffy is writing to you. I wish you could see him. He looks like a quarterback, and I think he would make a star player, don't you, too? Donald Lowrie is to start east on the 10th or 15th inst. Now get your board of directors together and come on *here*. We will give you and them all the whys and wherefores and *convince* you all that this work is right. Tell your little boy that when I said you are a *square guy*, that I *do* know *you*. And that I am only one out

of many here who think the same. I had a BIG talk with a fellow to-day. Sent him away converted. We can do the same with the most stubborn folks you have in good old Connecticut. Just let us try, that's all we ask. Well, I will close now by promising to answer more promptly now that I can, so don't fail to write. Your letters always will be royally welcomed. Best regards and wishes from all the boys."

"December 6th, 1914.

"Your letters arrived safely. Also the copies of 'The Chronicle.' You have some very bright boys over there, Mr. Hubbard, and I know the movement will be a suc-

cess. The by-laws you framed were gone over very carefully by Mr. Osborne and a few of us fellows here, and everything is O. K., with a couple of exceptions. These, if you will permit, we can talk over when you come to us on the 12th inst. Remember now, the 12th. Mr. Osborne will be here also, and—well, you just *must* be here. I suppose you have been following the newspapers closely lately. Poor 'Tom Brown' comes in for his share of criticism, eh? Well, it doesn't bother him one little bit. Just simply spurs him on. He sure is one grand man, and believe me, old Sing Sing will soon be clean enough to live in. We got a few messages

down ahead of him. No matter how, of course—but we made sure that the best fellows there would rally to his call, and last night a very cheering letter came, which says, 'The boys are with me.' That's nice, eh? Now you can and will be the 'Tom Brown' of Connecticut. Just keep up that brave heart of yours and you will win to the front with colors flying. It's an uphill fight, but the best battles ever won were fought bravely for. Stand shoulder to shoulder with your boys and you will just have to win out in the end. I wish I could be there to help you, for I'm surely in love with the work. We expect Donald Lowrie any time now.

Shall I get you in touch with him when he arrives? One of the lady workers in New York asked me to send him to her when he comes. They are planning some big work and want him to do some speaking. Well, I'll not tire you any more to-night. We will have a long talk when you get here on the 12th. Well, good-night. Best wishes for you and your loved ones. Tell your boys, I say to keep it up."

"December 21st, 1914.

"Just a few lines to-night as it's now 10.30 and I must retire to my Ostermore. I received your last letter safely, also the paper with the article marked. It's great, eh?

We sure won't quit now, will we? I suppose that you have already heard that you, Mr. Elton and the Judge are now honorary members. That means that you are 'Tom Brown of Connecticut' and the Judge and Mr. Elton are pals who will stand by you till the cows come home.

"Your namesake, Elbert Hubbard, spoke here a few nights ago. He is splendid and a strong supporter of the M. W. L. I was introduced to him and like him very much. I see in the paper that you have been down to see our 'Tom Brown' again. That's right, Tom; see as much of our Tom as you can. And say! don't fail to bring Mr.

Garvin here when next you come. Well, every one here sends best regards and all wish you and the rest a very happy Christmas. Also a bright and peaceful New Year. Write when you have time. Tell the others to do so also. Good night, Tom.

“Yours to a crisp.”

On Labor Day, 1914, the then District Attorney Whitman spoke to the prisoners in the yard at Auburn after the athletic contest. His address made a deep impression—especially upon Blackie, who felt moved to express his appreciation that evening in the following letter, which was sent to Mr. Whitman:

"September, 1914.

"Dear Sir:

"Having heard that you were going to address us inmates here to-day I made it a special point to be where I could see your face, and hear every word. I stood directly underneath you all the while you were speaking. And I am pleased very much—as I assure you—to state that the look in your eyes was as sincere as the ring in your voice. Now, Mr. Whitman, I will be frank with you. When the news came to us men here in this world, *intra muros*, that you were in the race for Governor, we—that is, a number of us—felt depressed—knowing that the continuance of our

Welfare League depended in a large measure on the man our State sends to Albany next Fall. We, of course—naturally, may I add?—felt that we wanted a man who would be with us, and we felt that you might not be that man. But now—well, I guess if you could be elected from here you would win in a walk. You stood up there on those old steps—they are nearly a century old, I'm told—and faced a crowd of convicted men. You heard their hearty cheers for you, and must have sensed that warm heart-glow that comes to one when he feels he is in right. Your presence here and your address delivered to fourteen hundred convicted

men by a district attorney shows you to be a man of iron nerve. I think I am safe in saying that you are the only district attorney in this State, or any other for that matter, who was so royally received, and the cheers that went up for you from these good, warm-hearted fellows, were—believe me, honest. Mr. Whitman, so sure am I that Mr. Osborne and his associates have at last found the much sought for prison reform that I would stake my life on the issue. The psychological moment has arrived. Should we eliminate all the other good things done since this great uplift movement began and simply take your reception here to-day as

an illustration, I feel confident you would join me in saying that that alone was a grand—a big thing. When a district attorney who is known as a very strict preserver of society's welfare, and who has sent many of these men here in performance of his duties to society, can get up and address that same body of men and receive the hearty applause you did, why nothing on earth can stop even the most skeptical from saying the movement *must be right*. What Mr. Osborne and the League have done for me alone would take a volume to tell. But from being one of New York's worst prisoners—under the old system—I am now

under this new humane one, striving to be one of the best and shall strive honestly to do so—to keep it up. We have a little movement on here now which we hope to make into a large one before long, i. e., we have adopted the indefinite sentence and started a parole board of our own. When an inmate transgresses against any of the prison rules he is taken in hand by a Grievance Committee. If convicted he stays in his cell while the other members in good standing are allowed the privileges. After some time has expired the Committee Board interviews the man. If they think him fit to be reinstated they recommend him to the Execu-

tive Committee who may or may not parole him. The Executive Committee uses pretty fair judgment and so far the indefinite sentence and parole system have been a success. Another big movement is being tried out in town. Men eligible for parole by the State Board are sometimes handicapped by not having situations. Of course it is necessary for a man to have employment before the State Board can parole him. Our league is represented outside by a competent man. When a man in here comes to the Executive Committee and states he cannot find employment the Committee after very careful examination into the appli-

cant's case, recommend him if they deem him worthy, to the League's secretary out in town. He looks up work for the man, and when it is procured the man is paroled by the State Parole Board if they in turn think it advisable to consider the recommendation sent to them by the inmate Executive Committee. Now, just one more item. I think it is too important to let go by. Since Mr. Osborne started this good work we have not had *one single case of suicide*. Under the old system I'm told the average deaths of that kind were from six to eight in a year. Now, Mr. Whitman, in all fairness may I ask, is not that alone about the most won-

derfully humane thing you have heard of in some time? I think Mr. Osborne and the officials should each have a Carnegie life-saving medal, do you not also? Well, I will not tire you altogether so will close by stating that after eleven years of the old way I never even tried to reform, but now my thoughts and actions are all for the best, and I sincerely hope this good work continues for I, like hundreds of my fellow inmates, do want to 'Do Good and Make Good.' "

CHAPTER VI

Blackie and His "Mother"

ONE Sunday morning, in October, as Blackie drew aside the curtains on the chapel platform in preparation for the service, he looked out over the crowd of gray-garbed men, and saw sitting in the visitors' box, some one who seemed to be the ghost of his dead mother. His heart almost ceased to beat as he gazed, for the woman's face was startlingly like his mother's, and brought vividly to his mind all the

dear days of his childhood, and the sacred associations of home. It had been twelve years since he had talked with any woman, and while he longed to unburden his heart to some understanding mother, yet he also shrank from doing so. He sent word to her by one of his pals that he would like to talk with her, but twice when she went to the prison to see him, he refused the interview. Finally, on her third visit she sent him a message to the effect that she "intended staying there until she saw him if she had to stay ten days!" Then she went to the warden's office and waited. In a few minutes he came, and they talked for over an hour. That

was the beginning of a wonderful friendship—a friendship which filled his remaining days with infinite peace and affection. As they parted that autumn afternoon—for the woman was obliged to return to New York—Blackie said to her hesitatingly, “May I ask a very great favor of you? It would mean everything to me, and could not possibly harm you, for I have not long to live—and it is only because of this that I ask it—may I write to you as if you were my mother? And may I think of you and call you that?” With dim eyes she told him how happy she would be to have him do so, that she understood how he

felt, for she had a grown son of her own, and that she would try in every way possible to live up to the trust and confidence he placed in her. Then began a remarkable correspondence. The flood-gates of an intense nature were flung wide, and the rush of long pent up emotions swept away the years of reserve, and brought to light all the concealed treasures of a deeply sensitive, poetic soul. Mr. Osborne realized that he had struck gold when he first met that forceful character with all its exterior roughness—gold that hitherto no one else had taken the trouble to mine, but which he felt would reveal untold riches.

Permission to use extracts from Blackie's correspondence with his new "mother" has been granted, for it is felt that in no other way could such a revelation of one side of his real self be given. The following letter is the first that he sent to her; in it he refers to Mr. Osborne as his "Viking."

"October 24th, 1914.

"Dearest Friend:

"Shall you mind so very much if I call you that? I haven't many friends, you see, and to-night I feel as though I would like to have one who I feel understands. This has been a beautiful day. One full of glorious sunshine. The sky was

dappled with little fleecy cloudlets, gold-lined by the sun's bright rays. The night I presume is splendid also, though I can not see very much of it, but as I gazed awhile ago through my window away out to where I know is the ocean of stars, I allowed myself a little diversion from this dull monotony by painting a few mental pictures. I seemed to see a phantom ship laden deeply with promises of hope. At her helm was a sturdy Norseman. By his side stood—a woman—a mother, whose face was so sweet and kind that I knew instinctively God alone had designed it. I gazed intently into the face of the man at the wheel and recognized—my Vi-

king—he seems to be directing the ship's course straight toward me. The woman's face is not *yet* clear to me, but I feel I shall know her some day, and that all then will be right—for as I allowed my gaze to wander still higher I seemed to see my own dearest mother looking down through one of the windows of Heaven—and she was smiling a sweet approval. 'Tis true, you will say, 'tis a dreamer, you will say. True. And I love to dream. You will perhaps now get a faint conception of how I used to laugh at the darkness and solitude of that twenty months of blackness when I did not have even a single ray of sunshine to gaze upon. Some day I may tell you

about the little cricket who often came to cheer me with its homelike little song, but I shall not tire you any more to-night. I am wondering though if I shall ever come to really know that sweet mother I saw to-night on 'The Ship of My Dreams.' Au revoir, dearest of friends."

"My dearest Friend:

"Your kind letter arrived safely. It is indeed nice for me to know that you have confidence in me—so nice that at times I find myself eagerly yearning to be worth this faith and trust you so kindly place in me—an utter stranger. Dreaming

again, you see. Strange thoughts for a bad man to have, you will say. Yes, I admit it. But strange thoughts do sometimes come to one who is so much alone—but as Burroughs says:

“What matter if I stand alone?
I wait with joy the coming years;
My heart *shall* reap where it has sown
And garner up the fruit of tears.’

“Shall I give you the first four lines also?

“Asleep, awake, by night or day
The friends I seek are seeking me.
No wind can drive my bark astray
Nor change the tide of destiny.’

“Another gem from memory’s
jewel casket. I have many such

and they are very comforting at times. The poem by Mr. Le Gallienne is splendid. I shall memorize it also. Yes, I have read Wilde's 'Reading Gaol' and have *felt* all he says in it. When I can talk to you I will tell you something that I know will make you happy. I've seen the face of the lady on the 'Ship of My Dreams'!"

Blackie addressed his new friend as "mother" for the first time in the following letter. He had held back because he wanted to feel *sure* that he could live up to a "mother's" confidence in him. But he had seen the lady on the "Ship of Dreams" and it was all right.

"November, 1914.

'Dearest Mother:

"What sweet memories come to me as I write that dear name—'Mother'! How many times have I conjured up her sweet face and had little imaginary chats with her, since I first caught a glimpse of the only woman who looks so much like her—only God and myself know. Forgive me for holding back so long, I wanted you—God knows I did—and do, but I was afraid—afraid for both you and myself. Not that I doubted you for one second. No! No! not that. But afraid that I might perhaps bring into your life some sorrow if I proved unworthy, and afraid of

myself, when I thought perhaps something might happen which would break our sacred covenant. But something happened a short while ago which makes me think that I still retain a few of mother's teachings. And now, will you grant me what my heart has been yearning for, for years? Will you let me try to go back to my Yesterdays? And will you go hand in hand with me, as I try to cross the bridge from Then to Now? I want to be good. I'm weary—sick and weary of the old life. I want to come out into the sunshine once again, and get out of the shadows. I know I've got to start all over again. I've got

to get back to *Her*, and I want your motherly help to do it."

"Your letter received, and I am very happy. If I can only stay on this side of the bridge now, perhaps you will be able to make something of me some day. I hope so, for really I am tired and would like to come over and have a nice rest. Don Lowrie has made good, so has Ed. Morrell—read Morrell's story in Lowrie's book. Ed.'s life and mine both outside and in, have been similar, so much so that you could look upon them as almost one. Ed. is now out, pardoned—and when last I heard of him, he was doing splendid work for the boys inside.

I'd give a good deal to work shoulder to shoulder with Don and Ed.

"I'm so sorry for all those poor people in the breadline you write of. I wish I could help in some way. One poor fellow in here was saving coupons to get his little baby a Christmas present. He was short forty, but he got them O. K.

"I suppose you have noticed that account of me in the papers. It's rather hard, and perhaps unfair, now that I am trying hard to forget the past. But it's *all right anyway*—so once again 'nuff said! Thank you for your promise to help me through the coming year. I may need your motherly love if I have to go to Sing Sing for an

operation. Gee! I wonder when I shall ever get a few moments' rest! All this constant pain is hell! Please excuse my French. You see now, do you not, that I have a retentive memory? What's that? Well, Sing Sing is hell—or I should say *was*. But with my 'Tom Brown,' you, Donald Lowrie and all our other friends, the flames will not scorch so badly any more.

"Every one here is in splendid trim. My old pal is battling constantly, and of course we shall always do our little part to help him. I hope you received my Christmas letter. This is for the New Year—and I hope the coming year will

be very, very happy—full of peace, joy and success.

“They say I’m going blind. Won’t you send me a photograph? I want to see you many times before the dark comes!”

The desired photograph soon arrived—a picture of the friend whom he called his new “mother” and her little ten year old daughter, who was very greatly interested in Blackie, and who used to write to him calling him “Brother Blackie.” One of Blackie’s most winning traits was his intense love for children and animals. The following letter to the little girl is a charming illustration:

"Dearest Pet Sister:

"Your beautiful letter received just when I needed it most. You see, dearie, I love little sisters, and you are so sweet and so good that your letter brought ever so much comfort. How did you know I was so fond of pets? Always, all through my life, I have had a pet of some kind. I wish you could have seen the pretty little canary bird I had at Auburn. It was such a loving little creature. I used to open the cage door and let it fly wherever it wanted to, and when it grew tired of flying, it would always come back. I would hold my hand out, and it would light on my finger, and I'd have a seed between

my teeth. You ought to have seen how carefully it would reach over and take the seed with its little bill. That was a bird-kiss, wasn't it? I loved that little bird, and missed it very much when it was gone. You see I gave it to little Pauline, Billy's little baby. She had a nice puppy, too. I'm going to see if I can't get a singing bird for my little sister. Wouldn't you like it? You see, dear, I love you already. Mother has told me what a good big brave girl her little woman is, and I just love brave girls! Continue to be brave, and some day you will be a good, good woman like mother, working for the Cause.

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"God bless and protect you my
little sister!

"Lovingly your brother,
"BLACKIE."

CHAPTER VII

Blackie's Release

ON December 31, 1914, Blackie was transferred to Sing Sing prison at Warden Osborne's request. He was so ill that it was thought best to have a throat specialist examine him. He was placed in the hospital at first, but upon examination it was found that the disease had advanced beyond help, and that he had only a few months to live. Mr. Osborne then had him removed to a little room on the third floor of

his own house, where he was in charge of a nurse and made as comfortable as possible. Here he was allowed to see his friends, and his new "mother" had the privilege of making frequent visits, which were a great joy to him. That little room under the eaves at Sing Sing was a center of interest in the prison. Members of the Golden Rule Brotherhood, and later of the Mutual Welfare League would come there to consult with that keen mind on important questions, and from that white bed of pain went out many messages of cheer and consolation to others in trouble. During the first month at Sing Sing Blackie was able to walk slowly

about the yard or to sit for an hour or two on the piazza in the sunshine, but the weakness gained upon him rapidly, and soon he was unable to leave his bed. It was after one of these "hikes," as he called them, that the following letter was written:

"Your beautiful letter reached me safely, and God bless you! You are a mother indeed. I had been a little tired—or lazy, perhaps, and was lying in bed when your letter came, and believe me, I got right up after reading your brave words; and this afternoon I went into the yard and enjoyed an hour of beautiful sunshine. O,

how I shall enjoy the bracing air and sunlight when I grow a little stronger, and more accustomed to the change! You see being housed is rather annoying to me. I do not think I shall ever know what it means to forget; as I lie here my thoughts go roaming away out into God's country, far, far from the glamour and turmoil of the cities; out into the open spots where one can throw back his head and drink deeply of God's life-giving air as it flows direct from His throne. Some day, perhaps, I can tell you of Dan, my pony, and a little something of our madcap gallops clean up into the foothills. Dan was my only pal in those days, and, believe

me, we grew to know each other wonderfully well. If I drew him down into a walk to let him rest, he would telegraph up to me through the bridle rein when he had rested sufficiently, then away we would go on another mad dash. It was great! and I can't forget. I'm getting good attention here. Every one tries his best to help in some way, but I'm not used to all this hot-house stuff. I would get well quicker if I were only out roughing it. But I'm going to win with flying colors yet! You know I can not part from you now. You are so brave, so hopeful and so kind that I'm really ashamed to be sick."

Shortly after this Blackie was made supremely happy by being elected an honorary member of the Mutual Welfare League at Auburn prison, and in receiving the silver button. It was given to him without one dissenting vote, of which fact he was very proud. He described his happiness in this letter:

“O, how happy your boy is tonight! Just think! ‘Tom Brown’ is here with me, and has just pinned a silver button on my breast, given to me by the Auburn delegates for—as they say—‘Invaluable good work for our M. W. L.’ I don’t deserve all this love, but it is very

delightful nevertheless, and I know you will be happy, and I can't wait another second, so I'm bolstered up here as 'snug as a bug in a rug,' writing you. There are only two such buttons in all these places, one for Jack Murphy for starting the League, and one to your boy for—well, 'nuff said! But I'm the happiest man in the known world—honest I am—and 'Tom Brown' says *I'm to go home!* O, God is good! I know it now. You cannot say now that my dreams shall ever go astray, can you 'mother'? Every dream I have woven shall be beautifully triumphant, and I know I shall make your heart beat with gladness, when you begin to hear

people talk of, and point to me with pride. I feel that I have it in me to go to any height, and I'm so happy! Now rest so that you can come up soon well and strong to share in my joy. You see I must settle down all the more now, and be ever so good, all in honor of the Cause and my precious button. I wish you could see all the letters brought to me by 'Tom Brown' from the boys at Auburn. It's good to be loved, isn't it?"

A friend who was visiting Blackie one day, said she had an address to make on prison reform, and asked his advice about it. Immediately he became interested, for

it was the subject nearest his heart. His eyes flashed with enthusiasm as he answered—"Just talk like the warden does. Tell them about the cold damp cell-block, wherein sick men have to huddle, and also about the cent and a half a day wages; about the wives and babies who suffer more than we do. Of the misery it brings to the man inside when he knows his kiddies and wife are perhaps without a fire on cold nights, and with perhaps not even bread in the larder for breakfast in the morning. Tell them that the State is making criminals and anarchists out of the children, street-walkers out of the poor wives who are forced to do it

rather than see their little brood starve and separated from them. Tell them of the hardened criminals you have seen, who, under the old system of cruelty, could not even be forced into a moan by all the torture, but whose eyes now light with love and reverence when the warden speaks to them. Tell them of the trust placed in the man whom the old administration called 'the bad man.' Tell them that that same brand of men is now being trusted, and up to date not one has betrayed the trust. O, you know millions of things to tell them, and every word will be the truth. You have seen them, you have heard the men talk, you have seen the look

in their eyes, you have had the personal experience. Prison reform may be a dream, but it is a dream that is coming true, and *soon*. A little firm determination, patience, perseverance, and a cheerful heart and the whole world will leap to your will!"

The evening of February 16th, 1915, stands out with an especial radiance in the minds of those privileged to be present when Blackie received his pardon. He had been very ill for days, and it was feared that the end was near, so early on the morning of the 16th, Donal Lowrie was dispatched to All to bring back the promised pardon from the Governor. He returned

about seven o'clock in the evening bearing the precious document, and Blackie knew of his return, but he steadfastly refused to receive the parcel until his beloved warden, who was lecturing in New York, would be there. Finally, well toward midnight, the familiar sound of the motor was heard, and at last Mr. Osborne appeared with the significant white paper in his hand. With his characteristic thoughtfulness, he did not give it direct to Blackie, but handed it instead to Billy Duffy—Blackie's closest pal, and the "whitest friend a man ever had," as Blackie once said of him—and Billy sat on the side of the bed and read aloud in a voice that broke

in spite of all his efforts at self-control, the words that made Blackie a free man! One prisoner giving a pardon to another! Had such a thing ever happened before? Truly this was the "new system." Blackie's new "mother" knelt beside him with his hand in hers, and a hushed group of loyal pals, stood wet-eyed in the doorway. Blackie's voice failed him, but his great eyes shone with an eloquence far beyond words.

The next day came telegrams and letters filled with congratulations. Messages glowing with sincere love and friendship, some of which were overwhelming in their deep emotion. One letter in par-

ticular was almost heart-breaking in its pathetic joy; it was from a boy of nineteen in the death-house at Auburn, saying how glad he was for Blackie's good fortune, and bidding him "cheer up"! This boy has since been electrocuted.

One of the last letters Blackie was able to write to his new "mother" was sent a few days after this—a letter that reveals the deep soul of the man.

"Well, 'mother' dear, this has been a very busy day for me. Visits all day long—publishers, politicians and ladies! I'm at home now to all who are kind enough to call. 'O. K. Bill' was the first this

morning. He rushes in with that big broad-gauge smile of his, and the room is immediately filled with beautiful sunshine. I wish society had about one man in every ten like Bill; he would easily round the other nine into wearing the right glasses, through which to gaze upon this dusty old world of ours. When are you coming again? I'm safe from myself and everything else when I have you in mind. I can not do any harm when you are with me. You say I do not realize what a wonderful help *I* am to *you*. Now please reverse that, won't you? Instead of me being a help to you, you have been the one to whom my thoughts have flown

when perplexed and almost despondent. You will never know how many times I have had to conjure up your face to help me fight some battles which I confess to you were at times heartbreaking. I wonder if you can get the slightest inkling of how much alone I was until you came to me. True, I had many loyal friends, but I mean alone without mother and my little sister. You came like a thunderbolt from a clear sky that Sunday, and you just took me by storm. Do you remember how I tried to fight against letting you into my heart? How I refused to go upon the steps and talk with you when you sent for me? Had you been like any

other woman you would have allowed the matter to drop then and there, and I would have won my battle, but lost the most loyal and truest of friends. But you persisted and won, did you not? I simply gave up my sword to the bravest general in this big army of the universe. I admire your gameness, and I surrendered to my general in all sincerity. There are many loyal hearts under these suits of gray, and they love my 'mother.' That repays me for all the lonesome past. To those who have suffered, sometimes there comes a time when one can say, 'I, too, am happy!' It is not so easy for any one to gain the confidence

of men in prison. They have been imposed upon so many times, that in time they get to be rather skeptical, and shy away from any advances. But you took us all by storm. Mr. Osborne won the love of all. Next to him you are the only one who really lives in our hearts. Well, it's just as I've heard it often remarked—'She's on the level!' and that goes all the way with us."

Over twenty years ago Blackie was sent to the Reformatory at Joliet, Illinois—at that time said to be one of the worst spots of human brutality on the map—and recently in that sickroom under the ward-

en's roof at Sing Sing occurred one of the most dramatic incidents in Blackie's entire career. Mr. Osborne brought to his bedside the former warden of Joliet—the warden who first inflicted physical torture upon him—and such torture! He was put in the strait-jacket for days at a stretch, and every time the guard came near him the lacings would be drawn tighter. He was suspended by steel handcuffs on his wrists so that his toes just touched the floor, and left in that position for hours. Every method of the “old system” was used in the effort to break his spirit—to say nothing of his body! The result of that term in Joliet

was that Blackie became an outlaw—one of the bravest and most scrupulous in the country. But the Joliet warden as well as Blackie had learned his lesson, and on the day that he bent over the wasted frame of the indomitable spirit that he had once tortured cruelly, truce was declared between them, and sincere remorse filled the warden's heart, for the marks of the steel handcuffs were still on Blackie's emaciated wrists. A particularly courageous action of Blackie's in connection with this same warden, occurred at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the League in Auburn at the time of Mr. Hubbard's visit to the prison. Mr.

Hubbard was desirous of getting points in regard to the character of the warden who was going to look after the new reformatory in Connecticut. Now it happened that it was the former warden of Joliet, and Blackie was the only man on the Executive Committee who knew him, which fact he stated, thereby admitting that he, Blackie, had done time before, though he had entered Auburn prison as a first-timer. It was the chance that he ran of losing his credits, and of getting in very wrong with the authorities by this admission that showed his courage. It was heroic, and helped a great deal, because he was in possession of facts

which were of much service to Mr. Hubbard.

Blackie's words were true. The "sand" was rapidly slipping through his hour glass, and in less than a month after the electrocution, referred to at the beginning of this account, Blackie himself had passed into the great silence. Just about sunrise on March twentieth, 1915, he suddenly raised himself from his pillows, and with a wave of his hand, murmured "More light!"—the words that the dying poet Goethe made immortal—and then quietly ceased to breathe.

His body was cremated at his own request, for he felt strongly the danger of spreading the dread

disease by ordinary burial. His ashes were returned to Sing Sing, and on Palm Sunday was held the first funeral service in the history of the prison. No one present that day will ever forget it. Some sixteen hundred men stood bareheaded in the yard, in the brilliant sunshine of a perfect Spring afternoon, as the little funeral procession headed by the prison band playing a dirge, slowly wound its way among the lines of gray men to the chapel. Six members of the League bore the bier, on which rested the ashes, inclosed in an exquisitely inlaid box made by a prisoner. This box was covered by a black velvet pall, on which was

pinned the delegate badge of the Mutual Welfare League, of which Blackie was so justly proud. A great wreath of myrtle leaves surrounded the little box, and at either end of the bier were sheaves of calla lilies, a flower Blackie especially loved. The services were very simple. After some verses of Scripture, two beautiful sacred songs, and a prayer, Warden Osborne spoke feelingly. "If ever a man had a right to have a grudge against society—to wish to pay back his wrongs to the world—Blackie had it," he said. "But my friends, no one has that right, and no one came to see that point of view more clearly than he did. He

bent all the powers of a forceful, remarkable mind toward helping his fellow prisoners—his fellow-men. One of the most characteristic incidents of Blackie's life occurred when the chaplain went in to see him. Blackie did not want any misunderstanding. I hope you don't think that after what I've been and what I've done, that I intend at this last moment to try to 'sneak' into Heaven, he said. But"—continued Mr. Osborne, "no one can 'sneak' into Heaven, and Blackie has gone in by the open gate!"

On Easter Sunday a memorial service was held in the chapel at Auburn prison, a service just as

impressive as the one at Sing Sing, and in many ways more so, for it was in Auburn that Blackie was best known and loved. There was no marching through the yard, but as the procession entered the chapel, the band led the singing of "Nearer My God to Thee." The chapel was brave with Spring flowers. There was no note of death there. It was all triumph! A never-to-be-forgotten Easter service. Blackie's spirit lived that day in the hearts of every one in that crowded hall, as it shall continue to live in the hearts of all who knew the real Blackie. As the little procession left the chapel to bear the earthly remains to their last rest-

ing place in Fort Hill cemetery, some fourteen hundred prisoners sang "Lead, Kindly Light," and no other music ever seemed quite so thrilling to those who vainly tried to join in, for a great resurrection light was flooding the "encircling gloom" of that prison as never before. Blackie's prayer was indeed answered. He had "*counted*."

"More light!" he cried, and then God
drew away

Life's threadbare curtain and he entered light.

At last the sun rose after starless
night;

Out of long darkness dawned the golden
day.

His debt is paid—let all the scoffers say
Whate'er they please, for in a desperate fight

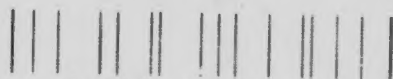
CANADA BLACKIE

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He conquered wrong with the white
sword of right
Though his bruised body fell amid the
fray.

More light he gave to us who loved him
well,
Light for our hearts so blind to others'
woe,
Because he lived we are made strong to
tell
How men can overcome. Grieving we
know
His deepest need was to be understood,
That he might prove these words—"Do
good: Make good."

THE END



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